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THTR 103.01: Introduction to House Management

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Introduction to House Management

Spring Semester, 2016

Department: School of Theatre & Dance
Course #: THTR 103.01
Credits: 1
Time: F 4:10-5:00pm
Location: 1/29: Masquer Theatre; 2/12,
2/19: Montana Theatre

Instructor: Abby Wyatt
Office - PARTV 105 (Box Office)
Phone Number – 406-243-2891
Email – abigail.wyatt@mso.umn.edu
Office Hours: By appointment only

Materials: Dark Pants (Black) or Dress, White Shirt, Dark Shoes (Black)

Course Description:

Students will learn the procedures and responsibilities of House Management and of Front of House Staff through participation in several classes/workshops, ultimately putting those skills into practice by working School of Theatre & Dance productions.

Expectations:

Students will develop an understanding of the importance of House Management and Front of House staff, as well as the professionalism necessary to work in the industry as a House Manager or Front of House. House Management/Front of House Staff provide the first interaction patrons have at any theatrical event they are attending, making these stations integral to a positive audience experience.

Additionally, students will learn methods to safeguard the audience during performances and the proper steps to take during an emergency. Students will gain insight into potentially litigious situations in the theatre and avoiding hazards.

At the beginning of each semester, students will meet as a group to have the course explained to them, receive syllabi, and to sign up for their assignments. Class/workshops will occur once a week for the first three - four weeks (TBD) of class to provide training and instruction.

Students will sign up for multiple assignments throughout the semester, giving them the opportunity to work a variety of productions under a variety of situations. Final instructions for every event will be given each night by the House Manager. A final review and assessment will take place at the end of the semester if necessary, also providing an opportunity for feedback and questions.

In order to complete the assignments for this class **you must attend all training sessions and sign up for and work 14 shifts throughout the semester: 8 as an usher and 6 in the concessions area** (the number of shifts students have to work may change based on class numbers).

****Call times will always be one hour before curtain.**** If you are signed up as an usher or at the concessions stand for a show that starts at 7:30 PM, you must be dressed and at the theatre at **6:30 PM**

sharp (**or 1:00 PM for matinees**)! Please be aware of whether the show you are working is an evening performance or a matinee. The meeting place for all productions will be at the UMArts box office.

The sign-up sheets, once completed, will be posted on Moodle for the semester. Please check frequently to remind yourself of your call times. A paper copy of the sign-up sheet will also be available in the Box Office.

Course Objectives:

This course is designed to give you an understanding of the process and responsibilities of House Management and Front of House Staff at a theatrical event. A knowledge of, and an ability to understand and appreciate theatre, only occurs when we have experience in every aspect of a theatrical production. We fully expect everyone in the theatre, from directors to volunteers, to act with professionalism.

Safety is of utmost concern. You will learn the appropriate actions to take in the case of an emergency, and you will learn to recognize and identify potential problems and accidents before they occur. Although theatres are becoming safer every year, the inherent nature of an audience seeing a play, along with a history of catastrophic fires, require heightened awareness and precautions. Also, theatres are often subject to litigation from audience members because of falls and accidents. People unfamiliar with a space or exiting or entering during a blackout are at a greater risk of injury. Ushers are often our only defense against such accidents.

One of the tenets of theatre is that everyone must be on time. Remember, in the theatre, if you are early, you are on time, if you are on time, you are late, and lateness is completely unacceptable. Because theatre is a collaborative art, everyone involved must be reliable and be prepared to do his or her part in ensuring a successful evening of theatre. This includes actors, crew, stage managers, front of house staff and anyone else associated with the production. If any one person doesn't perform their responsibilities, the performance suffers greatly. **We cannot stress how important you are to the success of the show.** You are the audience's first and sometimes last contact with the production. It is important to set a tone that is appropriate and professional.

Front of House staff must be at every performances for which they are called. **YOU CANNOT MISS A SINGLE PERFORMANCE!** Your grade depends heavily on it.

Course Meeting Times:

This course will meet on Friday afternoons from 4:10-5:00 PM for the first 3 - 4 weeks of each semester for training and instruction. Students will sign up for multiple front of house assignments during the first classroom meeting time, including 8 ushering shifts and 6 concession shifts (subject to change). At the end of the semester, students may meet with the instructor for an assessment and review of their work.

Grading:

You must sign in in order to receive credit for your shifts.

You grade starts at 100 points and will appear as such on Moodle. Any changes/deductions will appear as entries on the **COURSE TOTAL**. Ergo, missing any shifts or being late very significantly affects your grade!

If you sign up, show up, and meet all the requirements and duties for ushering and concessions you will receive 0 deductions and receive an A in the class.

You may miss ONE (1) shift and make it up for full credit

The following actions will negatively impact your grade. Again, note that all listed deductions affect your COURSE TOTAL.

Not completing sign-up sheets by due date	-20 points
Not attending workshops	-10 points per occurrence
1st late arrival	-5 off total grade
2 nd late arrival	-10 off total grade
3 rd + late arrival	-15 off total grade per occurrence
Signing up and not meeting all the requirements (see next page)	-15 per occurrence
Signing up, not meeting requirements, and also arriving late	- 25 per occurrence
Missing any other shifts after the first AND making them up **	-10 per occurrence
Missing any shift (including first) and not making it/them up	-20 on total grade

**Making prior arrangements with the instructor may allow you to miss and make up shifts for full credit.

You may earn extra points by signing up for additional shifts, worth 10 points each

Covering Shifts

If you are going to be absent (excused/unexcused), you may have someone (classmate, friend, etc.) cover your shift without any effect on your grade. You do not have to make up the **FIRST** shift you have someone cover. However, subsequent covered shifts must be made-up to avoid a **5 point deduction per occurrence**.

****In order to be excused, you must inform the instructor BEFORE your call time on the show date****

The short version: if you need to be absent, in order to have the LEAST effect on your grade: 1) Inform your instructor 2) Make up your shifts.

***Behaviors that may be documented as inappropriate include (but are not limited to) doing any of the following during a shift:**

- Spending time on your cell phone
- Leaving before completing tasks
- Not following dress code
- Not assisting House Manager
- Spending any time in the green room
- Rudeness to patrons

Your total grade will drop 15 points with each infraction.

Grading Example Scenarios

All missed shifts are unexcused in these scenarios.

Example: Student is late 3 times and misses 1 shift, not making it up: -50 points on course total.

Example: Student misses 3 shifts and does not make any up: -60 points on the course total

Example: Student misses 3 shifts and makes up 2: -30 points on course total.

Example: Student misses 3 shifts, makes up all 3: -20 points on course total.

Example: Student misses 2 shifts, makes up both, and sign up for an additional shift: full credit

Example: Student misses 3 shifts without making them up, but has all 3 covered by a friend: -10

Dress code:

- Dark pants or skirts (knee length or longer)
- White top (must be clean)
- Vest and nametag (supplied by department)

Prohibited:

- Open-toed shoes or high heels: for safety purposes
- Hats, t-shirts, and distressed clothing
- Extremely revealing clothing -- You may be asked to move large objects and/or handle hot items. Please exercise common sense.

House Manager:

The House Manager is in charge of both Ushers and Concessions during all productions. The House Manager will have you sign in and sign out, before and after your shift, and will also be signing off for you shift after you have finished with your duties for the evening. The House Manager will keep track if you are absent, late, or have any issues during your shift. The House Manager will also address any work or behavioral problems in the moment, and report back to the instructor of this class. Please pay the House Manager the respect he/she deserves, and perform the tasks asked of you for that particular show.

* Special Note: If you ever feel you are being threatened or sexually harassed by a patron, please contact the House Manager immediately.

Duties:

General: You are expected to familiarize yourself with the basic content of the show you are working so that you can answer any audience questions. There are a variety of videos and other media on Moodle to help you with this. If you are interested in attending a dress rehearsal, please contact the course instructor.

Ushers - Upon arrival, review the theatre space and familiarize yourself with the venue. You will greet audience members, take tickets and show patrons to their seats if the event has reserved seating. Ushers must sit near the doors during the show in order to assist in exits and entrances by audience members and to open doors quickly for intermissions, the end of the show, or in the event of an emergency. Ushers are also required to stay until the end of the show to assist patrons with exiting the theatre, to count programs, and to help clean up. Additional instruction will occur prior to house opening by the Box Office and House Manager.

Concessions- You will greet audience members and sell concessions prior to the show and during intermission. You will interact with the patrons, providing a welcoming atmosphere and informing them, when necessary, of departmental policies regarding food and drink in the theatre. You will be responsible for set-up, cleaning of the concession booth, and informing the faculty and staff of any inventory needs and/or equipment malfunctions. The PARTV building has had problems with both rodents and insects, so a proper cleaning of the concession area is extremely important. Leave no trace!!

Staffing - Each production staged in the Montana Theatre will need a minimum of FOUR ushers and TWO concession workers. Masquer Theatre/Open Space productions require a minimum of TWO ushers and TWO concession workers. If you have signed up for a show and for whatever reason cannot make it, you **must arrange for someone to cover your shift!** Calling at the last minute and saying you won't be able to make it is unacceptable. Also, please make sure you don't sign up to usher in both spaces when we have overlapping performances.

Contacts: It is your responsibility, once you have signed up for a shift, to remember your obligations. The sign-up sheets will be posted on Moodle. *Please do not contact the House Manager or the instructor of the class just to ask when your shift is.* If you have questions, concerns, or a last minute emergency, you must contact me by phone, e-mail, or in person immediately.

Contacting Instructor:

Non-urgent questions between Monday and Friday, 10am – 6:00pm: please email to abigail.wyatt@mso.umt.edu

Urgent questions/problems after hours or on weekend: please call **406-243-2891** AND email. I am generally in the building on show weekends and will be checking phone messages! Contacting the main Box Office at 406-243-4581 will also work.

Spring 2016 Theatre & Dance Productions

All My Sons – Montana Theatre

January 23, 28 – 30 at 7:30pm, January 30 at 2:00pm

February 4, 6 at 7:30pm, February 5 TBD

Hot ‘n’ Throbbing – Masquer Theatre

February 23 – 27, March 1-4 at 7:30pm

March 5 at 2:00pm

All in the Timing– Masquer Theatre

March 15-19 at 7:30pm

Dance in Concert– Montana Theatre

March 23-25 at 7:30pm

BE AWARE: *Romeo and Juliet* and *Dance New Works* overlap

Dance New Works – Open Space

April 26-30 at 7:30pm

April 30 at 2:00pm

Romeo and Juliet - Montana Theatre

April 27-30 at 7:30pm

April 30 at 2:00pm

May 3-7 at 7:30pm

May 10, 11 at TBD

University and School Policies

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php.

From the School of Theatre & Dance

All Theatre & Dance students must have an in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the School of Theatre & Dance *Student Handbook*. The *Handbook* is available online at <http://www.umt.edu/umarts/theatredance/About/handbook.php>.

There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre & Dance classes as they are very physical in nature. Please proceed through class, shop time, or rehearsal with caution. Always be mindful of your personal safety and the safety of others. Students participating in class/shop/rehearsal/performance do so at their own risk.

Due to safety considerations, at **no** point during a student's time spent in class or serving on a production (in any capacity) should non-enrolled persons be guests of that student **without my consent**. Presence of such unauthorized persons in a class, shop, or any backstage/off-stage area will negatively affect a student's grade.

From the EO/AA Office:

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). "Reasonable" means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult <http://life.umt.edu/dss/>.